

Statement of Hajim Al-Hasani, Ph.D.
Former Speaker of Iraqi Parliament
Subcommittee on National Security,
Emerging Threats, & International Relations
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Honorable Members, ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be here today amongst you discussing Iraq. I take this opportunity to thank Chairman Shays for inviting me here today, I hope that the information gleaned from this hearing will help Congress and the Administration move forward on Iraq.

The situation in Iraq is truly at a crossroads, we are working to resolve differences through the Prime Minister's National Reconciliation initiative. This is a good start, however it needs to be developed in a way that presents a clearer program detailing what insurgents and others have to gain from reconciling and determining with whom exactly the reconciliation is between? This process should be the cornerstone of present US and Iraqi policy and we should not allow partisan, sectarian, or regional politics to derail it.

The real question is what this reconciliation is about. I believe that the building block of this program is to reach a common vision on the new Iraqi state. The former Iraqi state was abolished at the fall of Saddam's regime, incorrect policies which were based on wrong information provided by major Iraqi actors, led us to flawed fundamentals in building the new state. The biggest of these policy mistakes were: dividing Iraqis to Shiite, Sunnis, and Kurds, dissolving the Iraqi security forces, and deBaathification. These policies negatively affected the security situation and economic wellbeing of Iraqis. The bigger issue was that the constitution was drafted on these flawed premises and subsequent governments were established based on them.

On the security side, the Army and police forces were built with an emphasis on sectarian and ethnic divisions excluding important elements of society: namely Sunnis and secular as well as liberal Iraqis. This consequently

worsened the security situation in Iraq. Debaatification left thousands of people with no resources for a dignified livelihood which pushed many of them to be part of the insurgency. The Militia's presence in both the army and police complicated the problem. The end result was, security forces were not loyal to the state but to their sect, ethnicity, or party

This brings us to the fundamental question that is in the mind of every single American today: when can US forces come home? I would say without any hesitation that any premature withdrawal of American forces will lead to communal civil war the only beneficiary of which is certain regional powers along with Al Qaeda and Saddamists. This will definitely not stop in Iraq, it will destabilize the Middle East by changing the balance of power in the region, thereby potentially disrupting global oil supplies. Terrorism will then be knocking other doors soon, especially if Iraq's resources fall into the hands of the terrorists inevitably leading to the eventual division of the country.

Finally, is reconciliation possible in Iraq? I would say yes! if the right requisites are used in building the new state of Iraq. Reconstructing the new Iraqi security forces based on total loyalty to the Iraqi state, Political reform is critical to resolving communal wars, the timing of which is obviously very important in order for stable communal relations to take root. A national army that excluded Sunnis would make any constitutional deal irrelevant, because the Shiite-Kurdish alliance would effectively hold the real power in the country regardless of what was stipulated in the constitution. In addition, amending the constitution in a way so that it is acceptable to the majority of Iraqis, strengthening the economy by stimulating strategic investment, fighting and prosecuting corruption to the maximum extent, and building truly democratic institutions properly are all policies that must accompany the reconciliation process. This cannot be accomplished without strong regional and international pressure. The US has a major role to play here, especially in manipulating its economic and military policy to compel players to abide by any future agreement or program.

The emphasis here is that the US has the ability to create a stable, economically viable democratic state as long as it stays engaged, but it must work to implement the aforementioned policies for us to see progress in Iraq.